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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [CD](#) [CT](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: CHAD/C.A.R.: FRENCH BELIEVE INSECURITY RISING IN
EASTERN BORDER AREAS, CONSIDER MINURCAT WEAK

REF: A. PARIS 1554

[B](#). BANGUI 256

Classified By: Andrew Young, Political Counselor, 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY: MFA Chad/C.A.R. desk officer Vincent Alexandre, just returned from a week in Chad, told us on November 25 that insecurity seemed to be rising in eastern Chad and eastern C.A.R. He said that MINURCAT was much less effective than it could be and was operating with serious manpower and materiel deficiencies. In contrast, he said the political situation in Chad was improving. Alexandre thought that the C.A.R. should be encouraged to hold elections on schedule in March/April 2010 and he thought former President Ange Felix Patasse's return would only help President Francois Bozize, by weakening Bozize's main rival, Martin Ziguele. END SUMMARY.

Insecurity in Chad and the C.A.R.

[2](#). (C) MFA Chad/C.A.R. desk officer Vincent Alexandre on November 25 shared his impressions of Chad, from which he had just returned after a week's visit. Alexandre said he was troubled by the growing insecurity in the eastern border regions of Chad and also the C.A.R. He acknowledged that there was always a rise in banditry and general insecurity at the onset of the dry season, but he said that the rise this year seemed particularly bothersome. He noted the recent seizures of NGO workers in Chad and in the C.A.R. He said that both kidnappings seemed to be motivated by money and not ideology, and said that dealing with hostage-takers seeking ransoms would be easier than dealing with ideologues. He said, however, that there had been no firm contact yet with the kidnappers and he was thus uncertain as to how the cases would proceed. He indicated that the GOF had put into motion its various assets in the region to find and effect the release of the hostages. He added that the kidnappers operating in the C.A.R. when they carried out the kidnapping had apparently gone to Sudan, where they were believed to be based.

MINURCAT Not Effective

[3](#). (C) Alexandre (who is a French Army Lieutenant Colonel on detail to the MFA) was equally troubled by MINURCAT's shortcomings. He believed that the operation was not being well run or well supported. He said that it was manned only at 52 percent of its authorized strength and further cautioned that this figure was deceiving, for the rear area headquarters and other rear area support units tended to be more fully staffed than the units actually in the field. One Ghanaian unit, for example, was at 25 percent of its authorized strength and did not have enough vehicles to venture out from its base. A Nepalese unit, intended to serve as MINURCAT's rapid reaction force, had severe ammunition shortages, making it incapable of carrying out its intended function.

¶4. (C) Alexandre said that MINURCAT, moreover, was being deployed in an overly cautious manner. Force protection was too large a concern, and the forces deployed were not being used creatively. The forces in the field were too rigid in performing only escort functions; MINURCAT was capable of doing much more in the way of patrolling and demonstrating a presence, which would have a deterrent effect. In Alexandre's view, MINURCAT's static and passive presence was causing it to lose credibility. He hoped that all of this would be taken into account when the UNSC considered renewing its mandate in January 2010. Alexandre said that MINURCAT's predecessor, EUFOR, which was widely criticized during its tenure, was now considered by locals a model, in comparison with MINURCAT.

Political Situation in Chad Improving

¶5. (C) MINURCAT's ineffective performance was unfortunate, Alexandre believed, because the political situation within Chad was improving. He was impressed by the apparent cooperative attitude between government and opposition that he witnessed, both in N'Djamena and in communities relatively far from the capital. He attended several town-hall style meetings where he observed that the opposition and government representatives were able to discuss issues in a constructive manner, rather than use such occasions to vilify each other. Alexandre cautioned that democracy in Chad had a long way to go but that there at least appeared to be these signs of positive movement.

Chad-Sudan

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¶6. (C) Alexandre said that Chad-Sudan rapprochement was subject to fits and starts. There was movement, however, which was encouraging, centered around Sudan Presidential Advisor Ghazi Salaheddin's visit to Chad. (NOTE: Ghazi has also recently visited Paris, ref A.) Alexandre said that in Chad, Ghazi had indicated to the GOC that Sudan would get Chadian rebels, ensconced on the Sudan side of the Chad-Sudan border, to move eastward and away from Chad. Alexandre said that this had not yet taken place, with Chad therefore unwilling to send its own delegation to Khartoum to reciprocate Ghazi's visit. Alexandre said that this sort of obstacle did not surprise him and he recalled the many false starts towards "normalization" that both sides had undertaken in the past. Still, he was encouraged that Ghazi's visit to N'Djamena provided a chance for the two sides to work together. He hoped they would both take advantage of this opportunity.

C.A.R.

¶7. (C) Although he did not visit the C.A.R. during his travels, Alexandre said he was keeping a close eye on events there, in part because of the recent kidnapping. He noted the return of former President Patasse and, reflecting thoughts similar to those expressed in ref B, acknowledged that it was not completely clear why Patasse went back and why Bozize allowed him to return without hassle. He speculated that for reasons of ego Patasse probably grew tired of exile in Togo and wanted to return to the world stage. Alexandre also thought that Patasse, concerned about possible ICC prosecution, thought he would be safer in the C.A.R. than in a foreign land. In any case, Alexandre thought that Patasse's presence would likely help Bozize, because Patasse and the other leading opposition figure, Martin Ziguele, hailed from the same general area in northwest C.A.R. and would probably split the vote there, affording Bozize a larger margin.

¶8. (C) On the elections, scheduled for March/April 2010, Alexandre said that France firmly wanted them to go forward. A delay would be bad, and as Cote d'Ivoire had demonstrated,

one delay made a second (and third, and fourth . . .) easier.

Of course the elections had to be acceptable, but Alexandre said that it would not be wise to insist on "perfect elections" ("impossible anyway") that would lead to an endless cycle of delays. It would be better to hold elections on time provided they were "respectable at best and acceptable at worst" than to await something more nearly perfect.

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